

# ARCORA Foundation

Bending the Arc of Oral Health Toward Equity

## 2024 Community Report



### Our Mission and Vision

At Arcora Foundation, our mission is in our name: to bend the arc of oral health toward equity. We share our vision with our funder, Delta Dental of Washington: all people can enjoy good oral and overall health with no one left behind.



Find more Arcora highlights and stories in our digital community report.

[ArcoraFoundation.org](https://ArcoraFoundation.org)



## A Message From the CEO

Everybody has an oral health story. Perhaps you grew up without fluoridated water. Or you or someone you know suffered from cracked or missing teeth.



Members of Arcora Foundation's Board of Trustees attend our annual partner and alumni event.

You may have heard me share my story. I was fortunate to have access to naturally fluoridated water and did not experience cavities as a small child. However, I did experience many periods without dental insurance during times when cost was a barrier to regular preventive dental care.

My experiences motivate me and inspire my work at Arcora Foundation; they are my why. Everyone across Washington state—no matter their race/ethnicity, age, gender identity, income, or other social and environmental factors—deserves access to what they need when they need it to reach their full health potential. You—dental and medical professionals, policy makers, community-based organizations, local and state agencies, Tribes, and committed individuals—help move our state closer to the goal of good oral and overall health for all.

In this year's report, you will see how your partnership is essential to advance systems changes through policy advocacy, capacity building, focus on expanding prevention and access, and other work. Together, we are writing a narrative that bends the arc of oral health toward equity.

I want to thank you for being part of our story to improve oral health and create healthy smiles for all with no one left behind.

- Vanetta Abdellatif  
*President and CEO, Arcora Foundation*

Honoring partners for their commitment to oral health and equity. (left to right) State Rep. Monica Stonier and Christina Friedt Peters and Tacey Mason from Northwest Tribal Dental Support Center receive our Oral Health Hero Awards (not pictured, State Sen. June Robinson).



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## New Trustee for 2024

**Anna Franklin**

## Promotion of alternatives to sugary beverages finds sweet success

Sweetened beverage consumption is among the leading causes of cavities among children and adults. Our Native and Pacific Islander populations experience some of the highest rates of tooth decay. That's why Arcora Foundation continues to work with Pacific Islander and Native partners to co-create solutions that lead to healthy smiles.

From our work with the Pacific Islander Health Board, they now provide alternatives to sugar sweetened beverages and educational materials at community events. These efforts led to broader conversations about the effect sugar sweetened beverages can have on diabetes and other issues.

Building on what we learned from Pacific Islander partners, we engaged in similar work with our Native partners at the Swinomish and Tulalip tribes' clinics. Focus groups that Tahoma Peak Solutions—a Native-woman owned firm—led resulted in culturally appropriate strategies and plans to bring stakeholders together to work toward solutions.

(left to right) Gabi Guerrero from Pacific Islander Health Board and Delta Dental of Washington Tooth Fairy Jen enjoy sparkling water instead of sugary beverages at Asia Pacific Cultural Center's 2023 Lunar New Year celebration.



## Teaching and learning central to Native collaborative for children's oral health

The Northwest Tribal Dental Support Center (NTDSC) continues innovative work to improve oral health. The NTDSC, 15 Northwest tribes, and Arcora Foundation recently launched Wee Smile—a tribal collaborative that aims to improve the oral health of young Native children through age 5. Participating tribes work to increase access to care, reduce diseases, and improve patient satisfaction. The collaborative's motto is *everyone teaches, and everyone learns*. Members share clinical protocols and practices, trust-building techniques, and other strategies to provide the best care to Native children in their communities. Wee Smile builds on a similar collaborative for adults. We're excited to continue learning from our tribal partners—and occasionally teaching them, too.



Started in 2000, the Northwest Tribal Dental Support Center provides training, quality improvement, and technical assistance to the 39 Indian Health Service/Tribal dental programs in the Northwest.

Learn more about Arcora's tribal partnerships at [ArcoraFoundation.org/tribal-partnerships](https://ArcoraFoundation.org/tribal-partnerships).



“Wee Smile combines innovative practices and traditional knowledge to promote health and healing.”

TACEY MASON, DIRECTOR OF NORTHWEST TRIBAL DENTAL SUPPORT CENTER AND CITIZEN OF THE CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF SILETZ INDIANS

Tacey Mason from Northwest Tribal Dental Support Center.

# Legislative action brings sustainable systems changes

Historically under-resourced communities and oral health had big wins during the 2023 legislative session. Arcora Foundation and our partners worked together to secure funding in the 2023-2025 state operating budget to:

- Continue the public-private partnership for DentistLink, the no-cost dental referral service to connect people, mostly Apple Health (Medicaid)-insured or uninsured, with a local dental provider.
- Increase pediatric Apple Health provider reimbursement rates for dental cleanings.
- Enhance the dental benefit for Apple Health enrollees with diabetes.

For the first time in 20 years, lawmakers passed community water fluoridation legislation. HB 1251 requires at least a 90-day public notice before a decision to start or stop fluoridation. This legislation ensures residents—as well as their dental and medical providers—have timely and accurate information about a decision that affects their health and wellbeing. Fluoridation is an effective and equitable way to prevent tooth decay. Special thanks to prime sponsor State Rep. Monica Stonier—and State Sen. June Robinson who championed the bill in the Senate—and the many oral health providers, medical providers, and patient and community advocates who made this success possible.

“Tooth decay is preventable and the number one disease that our children have to deal with...Parents and dental professionals should participate in the discussion [about community water fluoridation] before a final decision is made...It’s the right thing to do for families and communities.”

— DR. ELISABETH WARDER, DENTAL DIRECTOR AT CHAS HEALTH (FROM MARCH 10, 2023, TESTIMONY BEFORE THE STATE SENATE HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE COMMITTEE SUPPORTING HB 1251)

371,000  
People

From 2001 through 2023, Arcora has worked with our partners to ensure an additional 371,000 people in Washington state received the health benefits of fluoridated water—saving Washington taxpayers an estimated \$101 million.

\$101  
Million

Gov. Inslee signs HB 1251 into law. (left to right) Arcora President and CEO Vanetta Abdellatif, Delta Dental of Washington Policy Analyst Arwa Dubad, State Rep. Monica Stonier—HB 1251 prime sponsor and a long-time oral health champion—then-Washington State Dental Association Director of Government Affairs Emily Lovell, Arcora Senior Program Manager Stacy Torrance and Stephen Baker—a retired water treatment operator advisor with the State Department of Health and fluoridation champion.



More than  
\$2.7 million  
in grants and  
sponsorships.

\$2.7  
Million

## Investments in Washington’s communities

Systems changes is our long-term strategy. One of our approaches is capacity building through investments. These investments support oral disease prevention, access to care expansion, policy advocacy, and more.

Learn more about Arcora’s funding opportunities at [ArcoraFoundation.org/grants](https://ArcoraFoundation.org/grants).



Access to  
Baby & Child  
Dentistry™

ABCD is a public-private partnership of Arcora, Washington State Health Care Authority, providers, and others that connects Apple Health (Medicaid) insured children from birth up to age 6 and children with special health care needs through age 13 with specially-trained dentists in their communities.



MouthMatters is a systems approach to help medical providers successfully implement preventive oral health services into well child visits.

## Kids get care everywhere: ABCD and MouthMatters put children on a path to a lifetime of healthy smiles

Arcora Foundation works with public and private partners to ensure Apple Health (Medicaid)-insured children can access dental care where and when they need it. This includes in dental offices through Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) and medical offices through MouthMatters. We are better and do better together.

In October, the leadership for ABCD and MouthMatters gathered to deepen their commitment to children’s oral health. They welcomed Dr. Sarah Vander Beek—Washington State Health Care Authority’s (HCA) dental director—to the leadership team along with other leaders from the HCA, University of Washington School of Dentistry, the Washington State Dental Association, the state’s Women, Infant, and Children Program, Washington State Dental Hygiene Association, and Arcora. Dr. Susan Fisher-Owens—an expert in medical-dental integration—reinforced in her keynote address that both dental and medical teams are necessary to increase access to care and support good oral health from an early age.



Medical providers with MultiCare Health System Spokane participate in a MouthMatters training.

**48%**  
ABCD and MouthMatters have been critical to ensuring more than 48% of Medicaid insured children aged 6 and under accessed dental care.

Established in 2007, the leadership team plays a crucial role to guide and ensure the success of ABCD and MouthMatters. This was their first in-person meeting since the start of the pandemic. Together, the leadership team and providers and partners across the state are making healthy smiles possible for children now and into the future.

“After the training I definitely am more cognizant of oral health and more proactive about it. I feel more comfortable now after the training to screen, provide the service, and explain to parents why it’s important. I found the training so helpful.” — POLLYANNA LAM, MD, MOUTHMATTERS-TRAINED PHYSICIAN



Children from the Tri-Cities participate in oral health screenings.

Learn more about ABCD at [ABCD-dental.org](http://ABCD-dental.org); learn more about MouthMatters at [ArcoraFoundation.org/preventing-dental-disease-in-pediatric-primary-care](http://ArcoraFoundation.org/preventing-dental-disease-in-pediatric-primary-care).

# A commitment to strengthen the dental workforce through lifelong learning

Providers succeed when they have the resources to help improve patients' oral and overall health. That's why Arcora Foundation offers continuing dental education (CDE) courses in a variety of formats, taught by experts. These 2 we launched at the 2023 Pacific Northwest Dental Conference (PNDC) are among our latest:

- **Introduction to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the Dental Office – What it Is and Why it Matters.** It teaches the basics of diversity, equity, and inclusion, culturally appropriate care, and how to apply these learnings in a dental office.
- **Care, Compassion, and Connection: Delivering Culturally Appropriate Care in the Dental Office,** a discussion-based course that teaches dental providers to successfully care for patients of various backgrounds.

In 2024, look for the DEI course—which meets a state requirement that all health care professionals take a health equity course beginning this year—on Arcora's online learning library. We'll offer the culturally appropriate care course in-person to dental professionals across the state.

Learn more about Arcora's CDEs at [ArcoraFoundation.org/professional-training](https://ArcoraFoundation.org/professional-training).

92 participants in courses launched at PNDC:

88%

88% said the courses motivated them to learn and do more to understand oral health disparities a great deal or a lot.

80% said they intend to make changes based on what they learned.

80%

(left to right) GinLin Woo—equity trainer for government, community-based organizations, and nonprofits—and Dr. Doug Jackson—University of Washington School of Dentistry's associate dean of equity, diversity and inclusion partnered with Arcora to develop the trainings.



## LIN partners learn together to strengthen communities

A desire to reduce health disparities—including in oral health—sparked the formation of Smile Spokane. More than 6 years later, Smile Spokane—our first Local Impact Network (LIN)—has become a model for convening committed community partners to improve oral and overall health. Here's how our other LINs—North Sound and Pierce County—have built on that leadership:

- **Through mobile or school-based dental clinics, North Sound partners—East Whatcom Dental Days, San Juan Mobile, Oak Harbor Dental Integration Mobile, San Juan Sealant, Best Dental Help School Sealant—had nearly 1,150 unique visits from adults and children for screenings, sealants, or other oral health services.**
- **Through monthly mobile dental clinics, partners in Pierce County provided emergency dental care for 42 adults and preventive dental screenings for 82 children at the Sumner Food Bank—a partnership with MultiCare, Sumner Food Bank, Medical Teams International, Lindquist Dental, and DentistLink.**

In November, representatives from the LINs and Arcora Foundation staff met to deepen relationships and share challenges and successes. We're proud of our continued partnerships with our LINs.

“I greatly appreciate the opportunity to come together in-person with Arcora and LIN partners from across the state. These gatherings allow us to align across regions, easily discuss challenges and generate new ideas, and create a safe space to strengthen bonds, all of which accelerates our progress toward achieving oral health equity.” — LISA SHONI, NORTH SOUND ACH



\$900,000 investment in all 3 LINs—North Sound, Smile Spokane, Pierce County.

LIN Learning Collaborative.

Learn more about Arcora's LINs at [ArcoraFoundation.org/local-impact-networks](https://ArcoraFoundation.org/local-impact-networks).